



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge *Planning for its Future*

Planning Update 2 / September 2010

A Message from the Refuge Manager



Thank you for sharing your comments with us about the future of Arctic Refuge. We read through every one and appreciate your thoughtful suggestions and heartfelt concerns.

In this newsletter we will let you know the Fish and Wildlife Service's decision about wilderness reviews, we will summarize what we heard from public comments, and we will identify the next steps in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process.

For an analysis of the comments we received, look through the "Summary of Public Comments" report available at <http://arctic.fws.gov/pdf/ccpconsum1.pdf>.

We thank everyone who participated and look forward to the next round of discussions. Your input has been, and continues to be, very valuable.

Richard Voss
Refuge Manager

A Sample of Public Comments

"...ensure trapping, hunting, and fishing rights are always there for rural and non rural people."

"Responsible oil and gas development of the 1002 area of ANWR would provide a safe and secure source of energy to our nation, creating hundreds of thousands of jobs throughout the country."

"I believe the CCP ... should strive to maintain the ... natural biodiversity cycles and processes that have been occurring for time immemorial. For example, I believe predator control has no place in the Refuge."

"While airplanes are a valid means of access, the damage to fragile tundra surfaces caused by their unrestricted use needs to be curtailed."

"...but knowing such a place exists offers a calming certitude that there is rightness in the world, a place we honor and protect our earth which gave birth to us."

"The agency should implement use limits on rivers where overuse is occurring and should be proactive in preventing crowding and disruption of wildlife everywhere."

"Oil and gas exploration and drilling and other extractive industries should never be permitted within the Refuge."

"If you truly want to manage the Refuge as a high quality wilderness experience it is imperative to know who is using it in what numbers.... You cannot adequately control damage to the Refuge by regulating only part of its users."

"This plan will impair the ability of Inupiaq people of Kaktovik to sustain their community's subsistence needs by limiting access to traditional hunting grounds and will discourage responsible resource development in one of the most important hydrocarbon areas in North America."

"New regulations are needed to deal with the increased tourism on the refuge."

"Open up ANWR for oil and gas exploration.... As far as I'm concerned, this is just another land grab by the government and the green movement."

Village meeting - USFWS



"There must be uncompromised protection and perpetuation of the Refuge's wilderness qualities and recommended wilderness designation for those areas that are suitable but not currently designated."

"Intensive management of wildlife by the state of Alaska can significantly impact wildlife populations on Fish and Wildlife Service lands. The Arctic CCP should preclude intensive management of wildlife."

"I live in Arctic Village all my life. I live in wilderness. Wilderness to us is leave it the way it is as the creator created it. And that's how we always live for thousands of years."

"We believe it important the ANWR continue to be used as a natural laboratory for monitoring and science."

"My experiences in the Refuge include the mountains, rivers, coastal plain, and along the coast. These experiences have been, and continue to be, some the most inspirational and memorable of my life."

Wilderness Reviews

The Fish and Wildlife Service will conduct wilderness reviews of almost all non-wilderness lands in Arctic Refuge, including those within the coastal plain. This is consistent with the interest this topic sparked during our public comment period. We received thousands of comments related to wilderness issues. Not surprisingly, these comments reflect a wide range of opinions regarding further wilderness designations on Arctic Refuge.

The Process

The Service will look at three Wilderness Study Areas (Porcupine Plateau, Brooks Range, and Coastal Plain) and will evaluate whether a recommendation to designate wilderness in one or more of these areas would assist in achieving the Arctic Refuge purposes, the Refuge System mission, and would maintain biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health. If this process leads to a recommendation to give existing Refuge lands wilderness designation, the recommendation would be sent by the Fish and Wildlife Service's Alaska Regional Director to the Service's Director in Washington D.C. From there it would go to the Secretary of the Interior and/or the President of the United States. At each step, the recommendation would be further reviewed and possibly modified. Most importantly, Congress has reserved for itself the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation.

Conducting a Wilderness Review

We conduct wilderness reviews when we develop or revise Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCP). Wilderness reviews have three phases:

- 1) **Inventory** We identify lands and waters that meet the minimum criteria for wilderness. These areas are called Wilderness Study Areas.
- 2) **Study** We evaluate Wilderness Study Areas to determine if they are suitable for wilderness designation.
- 3) **Recommendation** We use the findings of the study to determine if we will recommend the areas for designation as wilderness in the final CCP.

The Wilderness Act and Arctic Refuge

With the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964, the U.S. became the first

country to officially recognize and protect wilderness. The Act defined wilderness:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man ...

With passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980, Congress expanded the Arctic Refuge to over 19 million acres and formally designated 8 million acres as wilderness. In 1987 the Department of the Interior published the "Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska, Coastal Plain Resource Assessment" required by ANILCA Section 1002(h). In this report, the Arctic Refuge coastal plain was found to meet the Wilderness Act criteria but was instead recommended for oil and gas exploration and development. In the Refuge's original CCP published in 1988, two wilderness study areas were considered—the Brooks Range and the Porcupine Plateau. Both were found suitable for wilderness designation but were not recommended in that plan.

In this revision of the Arctic CCP we will conduct wilderness reviews for all three Wilderness Study Areas. The three review areas encompass almost all Refuge lands not presently designated as wilderness. For each Wilderness Study Area we will analyze values (e.g., ecological, recreational, cultural, economic, symbolic), resources (e.g., wildlife, water, vegetation, minerals, soils), public uses, and management activities. 🐾

Public Comments

Summary

Many people shared their comments, perspectives, preferences, and concerns about Arctic Refuge and the planning process during the comment period April 7 through June 7, 2010. Thousands of people mailed or emailed their comments and 296 people spoke at meetings in eight communities.

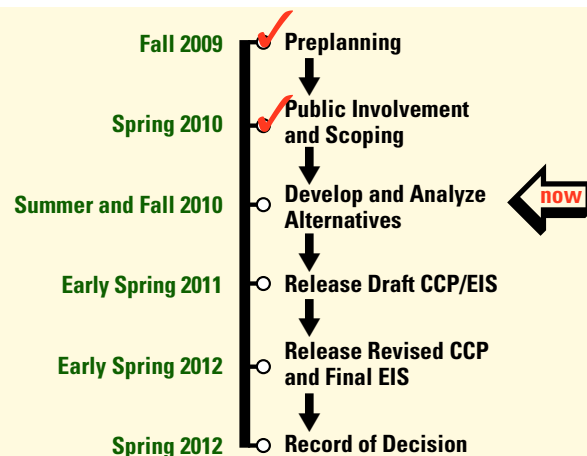


The Refuge received 94,061 responses, of which 1,480 were substantive original responses and 92,581 were form letters from 10 different letter campaigns. The responses came in emails, web forms, post cards, faxes, letters, and public hearing transcripts.

While many comments echoed similar concerns, it should be noted that the objective of compiling comments does not represent a voting process. Instead, the purpose was to find out what people think is important about the Refuge, and to hear about issues and solutions that could be addressed in the CCP. Every effort was made to capture all the issues and concerns expressed in the comments.

How Your Comments Are Being Used

Your comments have identified many



Timeline for Arctic Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and (Environmental Impact Statement EIS)

The Range of Issues Submitted Through Public Comments

special values, opportunities, problems, and conflicts related to Arctic Refuge. We heard there are things about the Refuge that should be left as they are. We also heard there are some desired changes, as well as existing and potential problems. In addition, commenters provided a wide range of ideas for resolving these problems. One of the tasks before us now is to go through each of the issues the public identified and decide whether it is best addressed through the CCP. If so, we will then consider different ways we can resolve or address each issue.

Once we have evaluated the full range of issues and the variety of ways each could be resolved, we will put them together into different management scenarios called “alternatives.” Each alternative will present a comprehensive set of actions for managing the Refuge for the next 15-20 years. One required alternative is the “no action” alternative which will continue management as it stands in the existing 1988 plan, as modified by current Fish and Wildlife Service policies. The Draft CCP/EIS will contain an analysis of how each alternative could affect Refuge resources (such as fish, wildlife, and plants) and the human environment (such as subsistence, economics, and recreational activities).

The public will have an opportunity to review and comment on the Draft CCP/EIS next spring. You will have the chance to tell us which alternative you prefer, or whether there is yet another approach that could be taken to achieve the purposes of the Refuge. Public comments will then be used to develop the Final Plan and EIS. From the Final Plan, an official “Record of Decision” will be signed, and then the plan will be implemented.

Public Involvement

Your continued involvement is important to this planning process. Another round of public meetings to discuss the range of alternatives and the Draft CCP/EIS will be held next spring. Times and locations will be announced. In the meantime:

Visit the CCP web page at <http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm> for updates on the planning process, to view CCP-related materials, or to get onto our email or mailing list. 🐾

Comments received during the public involvement period were analyzed by a federal contractor. The full summary report is available at <http://arctic.fws.gov/pdf/ccpcomsum1.pdf>.

The following text presents a synopsis of the report. The sections and subsections follow the report’s layout.

1.0 General Comments

By far the most frequent comments pertained to the Refuge’s coastal plain (also known as the 1002 Area). There was support for and opposition to wilderness designation and oil and gas development.

Arctic poppies in the Brooks Range - USFWS



2.0 Analysis (This section covers comments addressing the scope and content of the CCP and Draft EIS.)

Some express the need to update, change or add data to the existing body of knowledge, including studies of climate, wildlife, invasive plants, recreation, oil and gas, water, and air.

3.0 Process (These comments provide perspectives/suggestions regarding the process of preparing the CCP and Draft EIS.)

Major themes included decision-making process, outreach, public involvement process, public meetings, and the influence of politics and interests in the process.

4.0 Activities and Uses

Commercial Activities on Public Lands

- Designate commercial-free zones
- Commercial uses shouldn’t trump private uses
- Protect backcountry experience and ecologically sensitive areas
- Track and monitor guided and unguided groups through daily logs, emails, and by phone
- Improve regulations to reduce impacts from airplane use, commercial hunting groups, and other permitted recreational uses

- Implement selection process of guides to reduce impacts and conflicts
- Educate guided groups regarding impact mitigation
- Concerns about increase of permitted recreational uses
- Establish walk-in, no-fly hunting zones
- Set optimal group size
- Limit number of groups and base camp durations
- Quantify user impacts and share information with users
- Study impacts of permitted users on Native groups
- Recognize difficulty placed on Native groups from tracking, monitoring,

(“Issues” continued on page 4)

("Issues" continued from page 3)

- and permitting procedures;
streamline permitting procedures
- Increased permitting/regulations detract from user experience
- Guided hunting groups disregard Native groups lands
- Give preference to Native groups over hunting groups

Government Activities on Public Lands

- Refuge as a natural laboratory should not be compromised
- Guard scientific integrity
- Not enough manpower and funding for law enforcement
- Support for and opposition to the presence of more uniformed officers
- Native groups support more funding and staffing in Refuge
- Native groups want to engage in cooperative education to take care of resources
- Support for and opposition to the use of structures within the Refuge
- Support for alternative and clean energy

Private Activities on Public Lands

- Impacts from crowds of recreationists on wildlife migration patterns
- Set visitor limits
- Support for and opposition to establishing check-in desks and registration systems
- Support for and opposition to motorized uses within the Refuge
- Educate users about fire prevention, campsite location, interfering with subsistence practices, Leave No Trace practices, and human waste
- Set calendar launch days and limit campsite locations
- Support for and opposition to waterway restrictions
- Support for airboats, airplanes, and snowmobiles, and opposition to them based on impacts to air, vegetation, and wildlife
- Promote subsistence activities but also review their impact
- Ensure continuation of subsistence culture by ensuring the health and habitat of wildlife
- Support for and opposition to new technologies used by subsistence users

- Provide clarification of policies affecting Native group subsistence
- Designate certain areas as subsistence-only areas
- Recognize potential contamination of food and water from development activities and increased Refuge use
- Recognize mental health benefits of subsistence activities
- Opinions differ as to who is best equipped to manage resources, Fish and Wildlife staff or Native groups
- Designate durable landing zones for airplanes to protect tundra
- Support for and opposition to purchasing inholdings and Native allotments
- Support for and opposition to hunting and trapping
- Concerns about predator control
- Concerns about sport hunters not using meat and only taking antlers

Tribal Activities

- Respect and address traditions of Native groups
- Protect rights under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act
- Native group hunting methods are sustainable
- Respect significance of sacred lands
- Refuge should listen and incorporate Native concerns

5.0 Land and Resource Management

Refuge Purposes and Mandates

Most of the comments received in this context asked that the service avoid changing or manipulating the natural environment in the Refuge. Many others wanted to keep further wilderness out of the refuge.

Refuge Goals

Some comments mention the importance of monitoring climate change, utilizing recreation management, enlarging Refuge boundaries, designating the Refuge as a National Monument and protecting and preserving the Refuge.

Wilderness Designation

Support for and opposition to wilderness designation. Commenters raised concerns that wilderness designation could impact subsistence, economics, and access. Commenters supported wilderness designation as it relates to wildlife, climate change, ecosystems, subsistence, and access.

Wild and Scenic River Designation

Support for and opposition to Wild and Scenic River designation. Concerns existed about the impacts to subsistence practices. There was support for recreation use limits and dispersion, permitting, and studies and mitigation of user impacts.

Naming of Features

Opposition to naming of unnamed features.

Refuge Treaties and Agreements

Concerns that refuge treaties and agreements negatively impact Native lifestyles.

Support for compliance to protect polar bear denning areas.

6.0 Legal Consistency

Clarify the authority and roles of the Service and Congress, and the purposes of the CCP in addressing wilderness designation and management within the 1002 area. Mentioning of policy (Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act Section 1317, Section 1003) regarding wilderness designation. 🐾

Contact Information

Information about the CCP and the planning process is available at:

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Arctic NWR - Sharon Seim
101 12th Ave, Rm 236
Fairbanks AK 99701-6237**

And at:

web: <http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm>
email: ArcticRefugeCCP@fws.gov
phone: 907-456-0501
800-362-4546

Information about Arctic Refuge is available at <http://arctic.fws.gov/>.



Muskox cows and calves - USFWS